DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 292 402 HE 021 266

AUTHOR Stage, Frances K.
TITLE Outcomes and Development: Separate Notions or Parts of One Whole. ASHE Annual Meeting Paper.
PUB DATE Nov 87
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (Baltimore, MD, November 21-24, 1987).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Curriculum; *College Students; Curriculum Development; Developmental Stages; Educational Research; Higher Education; *Outcomes of Education; Postsecondary Education as a Field of Study; Student Characteristics; *Student Development; Theories; *Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *ASHE Annual Meeting

ABSTRACT

The literature on the development of college students is discussed, and recommendations are offered for developing a course on student development theory and research. The following observations about the literature are considered: (1) the literature on the college student is actually two separate literatures, one focused on outcomes and the other on development, and there are few links to guide meaningful synthesis; (2) the literature is largely monocultural, focusing on white upper and middle class students at large residential research universities; and (3) there is a lack of process models that tie directly to specific theory and that can be used to guide practice on college campuses. The outcomes approach is more sociological and uses demographic data to assess broadly defined groups of students. The student development approach takes a more psychological approach and uses theories to identify developmental levels or tasks of students. It is suggested that in courses on college student development both bodies of literature be used. To locate readings on students who are not part of the dominant culture, readings from other disciplines such as counseling may need to be tapped. Included are 28 references. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED292402

Outcomes and Development: Separate Notions or Parts of One Whole

Frances K. Stage
Assistant Professor
Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN

Presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Baltimore, November, 1987.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Frances K. Stage

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

HE 021 266

ASHE
ASSOCIATION
FOR THE
STUDY OF
HIGHER EDUCATION

Texas A&M University
Department of Educational
Administration
College Station, TX 77843
(409) 845-0393

This paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education held at the Sheraton Inner Harbor Hotel in Baltimore, Maryland, November 21-24, 1987. This paper was reviewed by ASHE and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC collection of ASHE conference papers.

Outcomes and Development: Separate Notions
or Parts of one Whole

Dr. Russell, a newly hired assistant professor is asked to develop a course on student development theory and research. The course should contain a segment on special student populations. And, because the class will be mostly masters students, it should touch on practical application. Her most recent administrative position was Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at a university of 18,000 students. Her primary responsibility was research on admissions and retention of students, tracking of students within college and a few follow-up studies of the success of the college graduates. It has been six years since Russell earned her doctorate and she does not want to rely on the syllabus from the class she took eight years ago.

Her colleague passes a syllabus along to her from a course being taught in a similar program. It is called "The College Student." Flipping to the page of readings for the course she is surprised that she recognizes few of the authors: Gilligan, Perry, King, Kitchener and Kegan ... Astin and Chickering are the only names that seems familiar. She looked for the names which she had expected - Tinto, Pascarella, Cross, Bean, Pace - but didn't see them.

After orienting herself to the fact that the literature she has immersed herself in for the past several years may have been "incomplete." She begins to re-educate herself. Again she is dismayed to discover that few of the readings mention any of

the special populations which she is to spend some time on in her class. She begins to conduct a separate literature search but finds that literature fragmented and for the most part only descriptive.

Finally, although Russell is able to find a few examples of implementation of a particular theory in very specific settings, she finds no "process models" to guide implementation of particular theory in more general circumstances.

One important dimension of an effective student affairs preparation program is the imparting of knowledge about college students. In the past two decades a large body of research has been produced which focuses on the college student. A shift from atheoretical to theoretical study of college outcomes such as satisfaction and persistence and subsequent testing of these theories have resulted in a proliferation of research on the topic. More recently, institutional concerns with enrollment problems provided inspiration for research on the progress and satisfaction of students who engage in college study.

Additionally, a change of focus in the student affairs profession has sparked new research directions. Since the early seventies there has been a gradual relinquishing of the "in loco parentis" role. Professionals became less concerned with controlling and limiting behaviors of students and began to focus on enabling and fostering student development. This shift has provided impetus for further exploration of the development of college students.

These relatively recent shifts in focus result in what seems to be an endless wealth of knowledge about the college student and the college going process. One might assume that with so much information on the topic it would be easy to construct a curriculum to inform the future student affairs practitioner. However, closer examination of this literature brings some troublesome observations:

1. The literature on the college student is actually two separate literatures with few clear links to guide meaningful synthesis of both the outcomes and the development literature.
2. The literature on the college student is largely monocultural, focusing on white upper and middle class students at large residential research universities. Such research does little to inform practitioners about the multicultural population that exists on most campuses.
3. There is a lack of process models that tie directly to specific theory and which can be used to guide practice on college campuses.

Each of these observations will be discussed in turn and some recommendations made for those conducting research as well as those attempting to incorporate theory in practice.

Two Separate Literatures

In general, those of us who study student outcomes view the college going process at the macro level. By and large we tend

to take a sociological approach to the study of college students. Usually, we study students in large aggregates and rely on demographic data to place students in broad classifications. We assess how these broadly defined groups of students react to their environment, and attempt to determine how these variables relate to outcomes such as academic achievement, satisfaction and persistence.

On the other hand, those of us who claim that we study the development of college students view the college going process at more of a micro level. Generally, in our research we take more of a psychological approach to the study of college students. We may use one of many student development theories to identify developmental levels or developmental tasks of the students being studied. Usually, as researchers we are seeking to link the theoretical development of students to specific kinds of activities or experiences on campus.

Unfortunately, there is little overlap in these two literatures. The student outcomes body of research seeks to demonstrate which aspects of college life can have positive influences on satisfaction, career choice, persistence and grade point average. On the other hand, the student development research focuses on where these students are in their development as college students and what can be done to foster further development. Possible connections between these two bodies of literature are weak and for the most part, remain unexplored (Stage, 1987).

Student Development Research

Theories and research which focus on student development provide a rich body of information for the student affairs practitioner. Rodgers (1980) classified student development theory into four major families: cognitive development theory, psychosocial theory, person-environment interaction theory, and humanistic/existential theory.

Cognitive development theorists such as Kohlberg, Gilligan, Perry, King-Kitchener, and Kegan focus on how students reason, think, and make sense of the world around them. Generally, these theories delineate stages in a hierarchy of reasoning with higher levels representing broader, more sophisticated ways of making meaning of the world. Researchers exploring these theories tend to focus on classifying individuals into stages and determining what causes movement from one stage to another.

The psychosocial theorists include Chickering, Heath, Levinson, and Sheehy. They are more interested in the content or the developmental tasks with which students are dealing. Researchers operating within these frameworks attempt to identify the issues and to explain how such issues are resolved. Both the cognitive development theorists and the psychosocial theorists believe that development occurs when an "optimal mismatch" exists. That is, if a student feels challenged by a situation in the environment but also is provided sufficient support to meet that challenge, development is likely to occur. If the challenge is too great, if there is a lack of support, or if there is no challenge, development is unlikely to occur.

Person-environment interaction theorists include Astin, Pace, Holland, and Clark-Trow. These theorists focus on characteristics of the individual, characteristics of the environment, and the degree of fit or lack of fit (interaction) between these two constructs. Researchers using the person-environment interaction theoretical frameworks may use physical, sociological or perceptual measures of the campus environment. They contrast these measures of the environment with measures of a student's needs, personality or sociological type, or perception of the ideal campus environment to identify discrepancies. These discrepancies are then used to explain lack of performance, dissatisfaction, or attrition.

Finally, the humanistic/existential theorists include Rogers and Maslow. These theorists focus on the individual and the human condition. They believe that each individual has the intrinsic capacity to become fully functioning. The common basic concepts of these theorists are "freedom and responsibility, self-awareness and self-actualization, authentic experience, openness to experience, and willingness to live a process rather than a content" (Rodgers, 1980, p. 58). These theorists emphasize the importance of a humanistic campus environment which provides stimulation, resources, choices, support, and acceptance for developing students.

The foundation documents of the student affairs profession stress the importance of the development of the whole student (ACE, 1937, 1949). Nevertheless, the role of student development theory in the student affairs profession and in student affairs

preparation programs continues to foment controversy. Much of this criticism was warranted because of a general lack of rigorous testing. Additionally, the integration of such theories into practice has been marked with caution (Strange, 1983). And some in the profession continue to doubt whether current theories are adequate to the task of providing vision and direction to those seeking to foster student development (Bloland, 1986; Plato, 1978; Stamatakos, 1985). As theories become more widely tested, replicated and understood however, the value of theory in studying and dealing with students in college is being recognized and appreciated.

A sample of 367 graduate students in student affairs preparation programs overwhelmingly supported the importance of student development theory in their preparation programs (Strange & Contomanolis, 1983). And, a recent statement by leaders of the field delineating a student affairs perspective reinforces the importance of student development to the profession (Sandeen et al, 1987).

The student outcomes research

During the past 50 years much of the research in higher education has focused on the study of student outcomes such as grade point average (GPA), persistence, change of major and satisfaction with many aspects of the college environment (Ewell, 1985; Pace, 1984). The field of outcomes research, though not new, has changed radically in the last decade. Prior to the 1970's researchers had explored many individual variables (gender, socioeconomic status, religion, etc.) in relationship to

any given outcome (grades, satisfaction, persistence,etc.). But few researchers attempted to tie characteristics, attitudes, experiences and achievements together conceptually. More recently however, theorists have developed models which provided structure and direction to subsequent research (Bean, 1980; Ethington & Wolfle, 1986; Pascarella & Staver, 1985; Tinto, 1975).

Achievement and satisfaction are no longer viewed as simple phenomena which can be predicted from a few easily gathered variables (Pace, 1984). Rather they are now viewed as constellations of characteristics, attitudes, experiences, and subsequent changes in attitudes which can be depicted graphically. Studies conducted within the scope of the new theoretical frameworks have been replicated and modified so that we can now speak with greater confidence about some of the positive influences on persistence, grades and satisfaction. Important environmental and experiential influences include the residence of the student, the perceived intellectual atmosphere of the campus, contacts with faculty members, perceived value of their education and academic satisfaction (Tinto, 1987). Aspirations and attitudes of the student regarding the importance of the college experiences also play a vital role in shaping poitive college outcomes (Astin, 1985).

Despite this general congealing of knowledge on the topic, satisfactory explanation of outcomes eludes researchers. For a student with certain background characteristics and attitudes, studying in a certain environment and participating at a

particular level of campus experiences, success or failure, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, persistence or attrition, cannot be predicted with assurance. Further, researchers cannot confidantly advise administrators on strategies that will consistently promote positive outcomes. The outcomes phenomena seem to be complex webs of interaction that differ from student to student.

Any practitioner attempting to use these two bodies of research in an attempt to let theory guide practice would find little guidance. To date only a few researchers have attempted to make such links (Bean, 1986; Pascarella, 1985; Stage, 1987). In contrast, most outcomes researchers seem to assume that students at widely differing levels of intellectual development will respond similarly to influences of the campus environment. Or we assume that students of widely differing psychosocial types are influenced positively or negatively by the similar experiences. So rather than attempting to use developmental or psychosocial types to categorize students for analysis, only easily obtained demographic indicators are used. This is in direct contradiction to research that has been conducted based on student development theory.

The Dominant Culture

Typically research conducted on college students focuses on the majority middle to upper middle class student attending a residential university. However, large segments of the population are not majority and increasingly larger number of

students are commuting to and from home. Some work has been done to inform us of who these students are. But, there is very little research which focuses on the development of students who are not of the dominant culture. And frequently these are the students who need the most help in negotiating a culturally different environment (Manning & Stage, 1987).

Fortunately, outcomes research has begun to focus on some of the special populations (Bean & Plascak, 1987; Fox, 1986; Wolfle, 1985). But, these efforts are only nascent and there are some populations of students (e.g. the learning disabled, homosexuals, Native Americans) who are not easily identified or who are not numerous enough to be included in such research as it is currently being conducted.

Process Models and Specific Theory

Attempts to identify process models to guide the application of theory to research can prove somewhat frustrating. A few good process models are available for those who seek to link research and practice. Blocher (1987) in writing of the counseling profession describes three basic types of conceptual frameworks. First are the basic philosophical assumptions which derive from global and abstract ways of representing human experience. They are untestable empirically, but help professionals clarify their values. Second, are the scientific theories which focus on and guide empirical inquiry. And third are the process models, which serve as a guide for those attempting to implement theory. Borowing from Blocher, process models can be defined as cognitive

maps that provide a direct and immediate guide for actions. They specify what one should do in a given situation. Such models should be evaluated in terms of outcomes. And, not the least important, they should be constantly polished and modified as experience provides more knowledge about their practical usefulness.

There are several multi-dimensional process models for approaching student affairs problems. The COSPA II cube focuses on differing clientele, roles and competencies (Rodgers, 1980). The Colorado State University cube focuses on target, purpose and method of intervention (Rodgers, 1980). And the Kuh cube requires the identification of disciplinary perspective, intervention theory and student affairs function (Kuh, 1984). The behavior engineering model (Gilbert, 1978) focuses on the interplay between environmental supports and an individual's repertory of behavior along three dimensions: information, instrumentation and motivation.

These models have provided rich fodder for conceptualizers and researchers who ply their trade by studying student development and student affairs organizations. Unfortunately, the typical students and new practitioners in student affairs are only beginning to read and attempt to understand theory. Such models with their wide range of possibile options do not provide enough guidance for those with limited experience and insight.

At the other extreme, the literature is replete with articles from the field which discuss implementation of a particular theory at a particular institution with a particular

set of problems. Such articles are too specific and do not help identify and match implementation strategies to our own environmental and institutional conditions.

So our new professor, who had thought she would be spending most of her first semester exploring and developing new research ideas, finds herself spending more time than she wanted in developing her course. Fortunately that exercise provided her with several options toward which to direct energy and research.

Recommendations

For each of the three problem areas Professor Russell was able to identify a solution to the short-term problem (information for class) as well as the long-term problem (focus of research).

1. Two bodies of literature

Use both bodies of literature in courses on development of the college student. Development of college students generally does not occur in absence of positive outcomes. The new student affairs practitioner needs to learn more about the dimensions of the campus environment which seem to have the greatest effects on achievement, persistence and satisfaction. Students could read both bodies of research and draw parallels and identify gaps in information.

As a researcher, Russell could begin to carve her own niche in the gap between the two literatures. Holland provides a framework from which one might study predictors of change of major. It seems logical to assume that campus experiences which

predict satisfaction for an Artistic type might not be the same as those which predict satisfaction for the Social type. Additionally, could it be that those who study developmental growth of students have underestimated the importance of peer influences on that process? What effect does such peer pressure in the classroom have on the cognitive development of college students? One can think of many instances where the student development theory might inform the outcomes research and vice versa. Such articles which span two literatures might be publishable in a much broader spectrum of journals.

2. The monocultural literature

In order to find readings for class on those students who are not part of the dominant culture, Professor Russell may need to supplement higher education readings with those from other disciplines. Since the middle seventies much counseling literature has focused on the problems of counseling professionals in dealing with those who are culturally different from themselves. These cross cultural perspectives provide rich resources from which to inform our new professionals. Additionally, psychology, anthropology and political science can provide insight into the difficulties inherent in negotiating a culturally foreign system.

Another area of research which Russell may choose to concentrate on is the development of particular populations of students. Such research may require a shift in style of research. Usually numbers of non-majority students are too small to conduct the quantitative multi-variable research which

traditionally has been used to predict outcomes. Additionally, these students' experiences may be sufficiently different from the majority students that more open ended ways of collecting information are in order. Researchers may need to adopt more of a cultural perspective and focus at first on small numbers of students. Consideration of a broader range of situations and experiences may lead to new models of development and satisfaction

3. Process models

Students could still be required to read the "how we do it" articles as well as the broader less directive process models. With a firm knowledge of a specific development theory the class could develop its own process model. Working through a process to link "scientific theory" to actual practice can provide students with a sense of satisfaction and professionalism in addition to a thorough knowledge of the theory being studied.

Again, the third problem presents the professor with a third possibility for research. She could focus energy on the development and the polishing of a process model for her "favorite" student development theory. Such a model might provide more direction for the new professionals as well as some of the older professionals who also seem to have trouble applying theory in their daily practice.

There are lessons for all of us as we follow Professor Russell's experiences. First, we can pay more attention to one another as researchers. It is tempting to focus our greatest amount of attention on those who are testing similar frameworks, operating within the same paradigm and talking the same language that we do. Unfortunately, this narrow focus stifles creativity and we end up reinforcing our own notions of research rather than discovering new directions. Secondly, we could be more flexible as researchers. It is easier for us to use the same populations, types of variables and modes of analysis than it is to expand our repertoire. Unfortunately, these self-limiting practices do little to expand knowledge about the development and outcomes we study. Finally, there is room for encourage the development of process models which make more tangible links to the practice which we seek to inform.

References

American Council on Education (1937). Student personnel point of view. Washington, D.C.: author.

American Council on Education (1949). Student personnel point of view. Washington, D.C.: author.

Astin, A.W. (1985). Achieving educational excellence. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bean, J.P. (1986). Clark-Trow revisited: Student satisfaction at a research institution. Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education, San Antonio, March.

Bean, J.P. & Plascak, F. (1987). Traditional and nontraditional undergraduate student attrition at an urban liberal arts college. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, Washington, D.C., April.

Bean, J.P. (1980). Dropouts and turnover: The synthesis and test of a causal model of student attrition. Research in Higher Education, 1980, 12, 155-187.

Blocher, D.H. (1987). On the uses and misuses of the term theory. Journal of Counseling and Development, 66, 67-68.

Bloland, P.A. (1986). Student development: The new orthodoxy? ACPA Developments, 13, (3,4).

Ethington, C.A. & Wolfle, L.M. (1986). A structural model of mathematics achievement for men and women. American Educational Research Journal, 23, 65-75.

Ewell, P.T. (Ed.) (1985). Assessing Educational Outcomes. (New Directions for Institutional Research, No. 47). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Fox, R.N. (1986). Application of a conceptual model of college withdrawal to disadvantaged students. American Educational Research Journal, 23, 415-424.

Gilbert, T.F. (1978). Human competence: Engineering worthy performance. New York: Mcgraw-Hill.

Kuh, G.D. (1984). A framework for understanding student affairs work. Journal of College Student Personnel, 25, 25-38.

Kuh, G.D., Bean, J.P., Bradley, R.K., Coomes, M.D. & Hunter, D.E. (1986). Changes in research on college students published in selected journals between 1969 and 1983. Review of Higher Education, 9, pp. 177-192.

Manning, K., & Stage, F.K. (1987). Personalizing the college context from a cultural perspective. Paper under submission to Journal of Counseling and Development.

Pace, C.R. (1984). Historical perspectives on student outcomes: Assessment with implications for the future. NASPA Journal, 22, 10-18.

Pascarella, E.T. (1985). Structural, academic and interpersonal influences on affective student development. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Chicago, March.

Pascarella, E.T. & Staver, J.R. (1985). The influence of on-campus work in science on science career choice in college: A causal modeling approach. Review of Higher Education, 8, 229-245.

Plato, K. (1978). The shift to student development: An analysis of the pattern of change. NASPA Journal, 15(4), 32-36.

Rodgers, R.F. (1980). Theories underlying student development. In Creamer, D. (Ed.) Student development in higher education. Cincinnati: ACPA Media.

Sandeen A., Albright, R., Barr, M., Golseth, A., Kuh, G., Lyons, J. & Rhatigan, J. (1987). A perspective on student affairs. A statement issued on the fiftieth anniversary of The Student Personnel Point of View.

Stage, F.K. (1987). Student typologies and the study of college outcomes. Paper under submission to the Review of Higher Education.

Stamatakos, L.C. (1985). Educating tomorrow's college student: Our past as foundations for the future. Address given May 1985, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Strange, C.C. (1983). Human development theory and student affairs practice: Ships passing in the daylight? NASPA Journal, 21(1), 2-8.

Strange, C.C. & Contomanolis, E. (1983). Knowledge perceptions of human development theory among student affairs masters students. Journal of College Student Personnel, 24, 197-201.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. Review of Educational Research, 45, 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1987). Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Wolfle, L. (1985). Postsecondary educational attainment among whites and blacks. American Educational Research Journal, 22. 501-525.